

Proposed Senate Bill S. 2282
“Native American Agricultural Research, Development and Export Enhancement
Act of 2000”

Pueblo of Zuni

Governor Malcolm B. Bowekaty

(Testimony on S. 2282, related to the United States Department of Agriculture-USDA)

June 14, 2000

Introduction

On behalf of my Zuni people, Honorable Chairman, esteemed Senators, it is with great honor and pleasure that I appear before you to advocate for **S. 2282**. The Pueblo of Zuni is in complete agreement with the findings, purpose and intent as stated in the proposed bill. The lack of coordination and inefficient use of existing resources and assets by USDA has hindered American Indian/Alaska Natives’ (AI/AN) sustainable economies.

Overview

A potential windfall for all tribes is feasible if we structure and amass resources that this bill intends. Too often we have fought. Too often we have been critical. Let us put that aside. We see a mechanism to invigorate and re-instill pride and self-reliance among our Pueblo people and all other tribes. You will hear witnesses’ present examples and evidence of possibilities for mutual growth and mutual productivity if the right organizational framework, skills and authority are legislated and enacted. This mix will enable our tribes to reap benefits and coordination of services heretofore not accessible.

We believe the potential possibilities of **S. 2282** are understated. First, the strategic objective of developing economies of Native American tribes and the stimulation of markets and demands for Indian agricultural products and services are realistic and achievable. Secondly, the explicit mandate for comprehensive access to existing departmental resources consolidate policy and direction within the USDA to a singular objective. Native American tribes can now have equivalent access to resources that U.S. farmers and producers have had. These two objectives encompass and operationalize Trust Responsibility by the USDA to their AI/AN constituents.

Pueblo of Zuni Position

We humbly and sincerely present the following recommendations based on our experiences with supporting documentation and materials to illustrate our opening statements. I truly hope the information is useful and that it is of import in your deliberations.

Historical Relevance on **S. 2282**

The economic self-determination ingrained in S. 2282 is reality re-incarnate. My A:shiwi (Zuni) people have been traditionally and historically independent and self-reliant. They had extensive acreage under cultivation through extensive networks of irrigation channels and gabions to

disperse floodwaters over alluvial fans to optimize on nature's rainfall. (Photo 1) They surpassed experimentation on dry-farming methods and applied these techniques for growing drought resistant beans, corn, squash, peaches and other utilitarian grasses and shrubs. Their sacred Zuni Salt Lake provided minerals for preservation of produce, fruits and meats. This was the mainstay of their export program that enabled them to trade for copper bells and macaw feathers from interior Mexico; seashells, conch shells from the Sea of Cortez; and, buffalo hides from the plains area.

Dry farming with drought resistant corn, bean and squash varieties allowed us to supply food to the Spanish conquistadors, catholic priests and their Indian scouts. These alluvial irrigation practices produced forage for the Spanish conquistadors' horses, oxen and traveling poultry shops. These same practices enabled our A:shiwí (Zuni) people to rescue starving explorers, settlers and later the U.S. Cavalry and Army. (Photo 2) Our harvested wheat, corn, squash, and produce nourished US cavalymen and their horses; even providing forage for the Beagle Camel Corps.

Contemporary Relevance and New Possibilities-S. 2282

Our good neighbor policy allowed settlement and the subsequent severance and alienation of our lands, water and natural resources. Still, we harvested timber for bridges, railroads and business stores for Gallup, Grants, Milan and St Johns. Our forest and lands became denuded and crisscrossed with gullies. Our rivers were dammed, which decreased sedimentation that deepened gullies. We have our stream flow lines at 10 ft below grade of our agricultural fields. (Photo 3) No longer do we see pigs float on houseboats to Arizona. (Photo 4)

Although we are severed access to our foundation of self-reliance and independence, the litany of woes is past we strive to look to the future. Our agricultural prowess can still see a renaissance and revival from S. 2282 assistance. The coordination of resources under USDA for agricultural infrastructure rebuilding, research, export marketing and business development is very attractive.

My A:shiwí (Zuni) people have struggled for over three decades to catalyze that illusive combination of ideas, capital and marketing resources to be economically productive and sustain market demands . We see this bill as one of many strategies and opportunities that build on our history and tradition for economic benefits. This may be the catalyst for my people to concoct that illusive mix of economic success.

Native American Research, Development and Export Office (NARDEO)

S. 2282 is critically accurate in emphasizing coordination to maximize success. At a minimum, the creation of the "Native American Research, Development and Export Office" and Director's position is vital. However, we urge this committee to add one (1) more position because of practical lessons learned elsewhere that the scope and magnitude of coordination, promotion and building partnerships with other federal departments is beyond the capacity of one individual. Let's not short-change effectiveness and growth, at the outset, by an incomplete structural capacity and support system.

Duties and Activities- NADEO and Trade and Export Promotion

The duties of coordinating seven (7) mission areas and the activities of developing and promoting Indian Agricultural programs, facilitating water, housing, utility and infrastructure development is a heavy workload. The duties and activities of establishing and implementing an export and trade promotion programs is equally burdensome for one person. Albeit attainable but not the quality that Native American tribes are expecting.

Furthermore, the magnitude of policy implementation and agency programs coordination of S. 2282's intent at the Headquarters, regional and local/state levels are significantly difficult and complex. Let me explain with a simple diagram the scope and magnitude:

USDA

Secretary→ Director RDEO→Farm & Foreign Ag Service→

USDA-Agencies

Food, Nut & Consumer Ser
Food Safety
Marketing & Regulatory
Natural Resources & Envir
Res, Educ, & Economics
Rural Development

Federal Departments

Dept of Energy
Dept HUD
Dept of Interior
Dept of Justice
Dept of Commerce
Dept of Treasury
Dept of Transportation

Regional Offices→
Local/State Offices→

USDA-Agencies
USDA-Agencies

Federal Departments
Federal Departments

An astute Senior Executive may be able to coordinate competently within the national USDA agencies, but not to the same competence with all other federal departmental agencies. The regional and local level agencies will be similarly constrained in effectiveness. Overlay this inter-agency/regional process with Native American tribal consultation and service delivery obviates the need for additional staff. Two full time equivalent positions (2 FTE’s) are not adequate but we can refine this in subsequent years. Clearly, one additional position can effectively divide coordination and implementation activities at both regional and local/state offices.

The duties and activities indicate a need for a tenured Senior Level executive. The position must advertise for an executive with strategic planning background, applied economics background, tribal business development background, and public relations experience. The ability to leverage funds, foster and maintain communications and dialogue are essential abilities for the position.

The magnitude and complexity of work require strong effective support. Direct financial, administrative, technical and political support and assistance is pivotal to solidify success and assure consistency in policy application and operational maintenance. USDA Secretarial support and placement in the Secretary’s office is critical for administrative endorsement in policy application peer acceptance of legitimacy for the NARDEO program. Anything less will build in failure.

Examples for Success

Let us illustrate with some examples through the following federal departments: Department of Interior- BIA (DOI/BIA), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA/AIEO) and USDA-Rural Development.

The BIA has had several decades of assisting Native American tribes but the budget in recent years for economic development is minimal, \$5 million dollars at most. This has been inadequate for funding a significant number of tribes, individual Indian applicants and corporate businesses. The federal Small Business Administration clearly has a firm funding level and infrastructure to assist minority firms including Native Americans. The BIA, has political, administrative and technical support but lack firm funding levels to make a significant impact.

The EPA’s American Indian Environmental Office (AIEO) is similar. The AIEO has financial, technical and secretarial support, yet it is not attached nor placed in the Secretary’s office. At a recent Strategic Goals and objectives up date meeting, Native American EPA goals were not adequately discussed and haphazardly formulated. The various agency program directors consulted with a small group of AI/AN representatives in lieu of formal tribal consultation by regions. Conversely, the regional offices were more responsive to tribes and their needs. Our tribe

has received EPA grant funds for programmatic support and constructed wetlands funds and sewer lagoon expansion funds.

The USDA Rural Development Office is an exception to what's missing. They have had secretarial support, financial support, technical support and competent personnel at the headquarters level. The various regional offices are effective too a certain extent. The Rural Utility Service- Water and Waste Disposal program has serendipitously merged the right mix of strategy finance and technical personnel to began meeting infrastructure needs of tribes. The program establish in 1994 has seen growth that we believe is possible in S. 2282.

| <u>Year</u> | <u>Projects Funded</u> | <u>Loans Obligated</u> | <u>Grants Obligated</u> |
|-------------|------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1994 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 1995 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 1996 | 13 | 6 | 10 |
| 1997 | 35 | 8 | 33 |
| 1998 | 21 | 8 | 21 |
| <u>1999</u> | <u>40</u> | <u>16</u> | <u>40</u> |
| Total | 110 | \$20,745,838 | \$62,832,040 |

This Table illustrates the five-year track record of projects funded and total grant and loan funds awarded to AI/AN tribes for water and waste disposal projects. (See Appendix 1) Seventy-five tribes from sixteen states have competitively secured funds with more awaiting FY 2000 funds.

Our tribe has been direct beneficiaries from this agency. We have secured over \$7.7 million dollars for a water supply and distribution project that gives our tribe a chance at economic development. Our previous water supply was depleted, full of iron permanganate the blackened drinking water. Our residents, schools, hospitals and community centers experience water shortages monthly.

Potential Opportunities within USDA

Our tribe can benefit from the array of agency service and programs if the coordination is implemented. An Indian office can facilitate needs assessments and project financing options and capital for infrastructure needs for a competitive advantage in economic development. We have developed a strategic economic plan that incorporates all facets financial, technical and marketing resources that are available in all federal departments. The USDA is first stop for our needs should **S. 2282** become law. The following is a synopsised list of projects currently in need of funds or in the planning stages for our tribe.

Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services

Our tribe can benefit from farm loans for ranchers and farmers hardest hit with the drought in the southwest. The Conservation Reserve program is clearly applicable to our attempts at reclaiming eroded agricultural and forest Lands. The Emergency Conservation Program for drought measures needs to be waived for tribes, current regulations prohibit our access. We had flooding

last year that federal and state agencies did not deem sufficiently high in dollar damage, therefore we have unmet flood damage needs. The Emergency Watershed Protection Program will be most applicable for coordination for tribes in our similar predicament.

Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services

Currently our tribe receives services from the WIC, Food Distribution Program, School Lunch Program and Community Food Security. We have had to subsidize administrative costs and food warehousing and storage facilities.

Food Safety

No direct services received.

Marketing and Regulatory Programs

No direct services received.

Natural Resources and Environment

We are in stewardship agreements with our Southwest Forest Service Office. We are harvesting small diameter timber for our local tribal sawmill. Lumber for housing construction, furniture manufacturing and value added products are derived from small diameter timber. This has been a very productive and valuable venture. (See Appendix 2) Our agreement assists the Forest Service in management of timber and forest lands. We assist in reduction of fire fuels, healthy timber stands and erosion control practices.

We are participants in the Southwest Strategy for several federal agencies including USDA that have enabled us to present regional policy and tribal needs for expedited feedback and resolution. We are supportive of this initiative and advocate for a national model to assist other regions and tribes in the nation.

We are establishing wetlands with the assistance of the NRCS, US F & W at our Zuni Heaven Reservation. Our Zuni reservation-based constructed wetlands and riparian area has been featured as prominent migratory routes for songbirds, ducks, geese and homes for two endangered species- willow flycatcher and Zuni Mountain Sucker. We have subsidized these projects with tribal resources; increased assistance from NRCS would be beneficial.

Research, Education and Economics

As mentioned in the history section, projects from this agency could help in restoring native species of corn, beans and squash for Intellectual Property Rights establishment and marketing options. Our local native seed bank will benefit from such assistance.

Rural Development

As stated previously, the RUS program has been of enormous strategic and financial assistance for our people's effort at self-determination. We are strong supporters of the agency and advocate for additional stable funding for infrastructure building.

Summary and Conclusion

The intent of **S. 2282** is clear and comprehensively articulated. USDA must foster economic self-sufficiency by promoting the coordination of existing resources and assets of the department for their Native American constituents. The establishment of the NARDEO office and the two director positions at a minimum is a worthy investment to ensure effectiveness and achievement of the proposed bill **S. 2282**. The Pueblo of Zuni is strongly supporting the bill and we encourage adoption of our recommendations. On behalf of our A:shiwi (Zuni) people , Thank You!